

Zephaniah 1:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

Analysis

That day is a day of wrath (יֹם עֲבָרָה yom evrah)—Zephaniah's sevenfold repetition of 'day' (יֹם yom) creates a drumbeat of doom describing the Day of the LORD. The Latin hymn Dies Irae draws directly from this verse's apocalyptic imagery.

Darkness and gloominess (חֹשֶׁךְ וְאַפֶּלָּה choshek va'afelah)—This echoes the ninth plague of Egypt (Exodus 10:22) and Joel's locust judgment (Joel 2:2), establishing the Day of the LORD as a cosmic undoing of creation's light. The **clouds and thick darkness** (עָנָן וְעֲרֵפֶל anan va'arafel) recall Sinai's theophany (Exodus 19:16), but here God comes not to covenant but to judge covenant-breakers.

Historical Context

Zephaniah prophesied during Josiah's reign (640-609 BC), likely before the 621 BC reforms. Judah faced imminent Babylonian invasion, making this 'day of wrath' both near-term judgment and eschatological foreshadowing of final judgment.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Zephaniah's imagery challenge superficial views of God's love that ignore His wrath against sin?
2. Where do you see 'darkness' in contemporary culture that signals God's withdrawing presence?
3. How should the certainty of coming judgment shape your priorities and proclamation today?

Interlinear Text

יֹאם	עֲבָרָה	יֹאם	הַיּוֹם	יֹאם	צָרָה	וּמְצוֹקָה
That day	of wrath	That day	H1931	That day	of trouble	and distress
H3117	H5678	H3117		H3117	H6869	H4691
יֹאם	שָׁמָּה	וּמִשׁוֹאָה	יֹאם	חֹשֶׁךְ	וְאֶפְלָה	
That day	of wasteness	and desolation	That day	of darkness	and gloominess	
H3117	H7722	H4875	H3117	H2822	H653	
יֹאם	עָנָן	וְעֲרֵפָל:				
That day	of clouds	and thick darkness				
H3117	H6051	H6205				

Additional Cross-References

Joel 2:2 (Darkness): A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

Isaiah 22:5 (Parallel theme): For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains.

Revelation 6:17 (Judgment): For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

